

Recognizing HIV-Related Stigma to Improve Care

The Medical Monitoring Project (MMP)

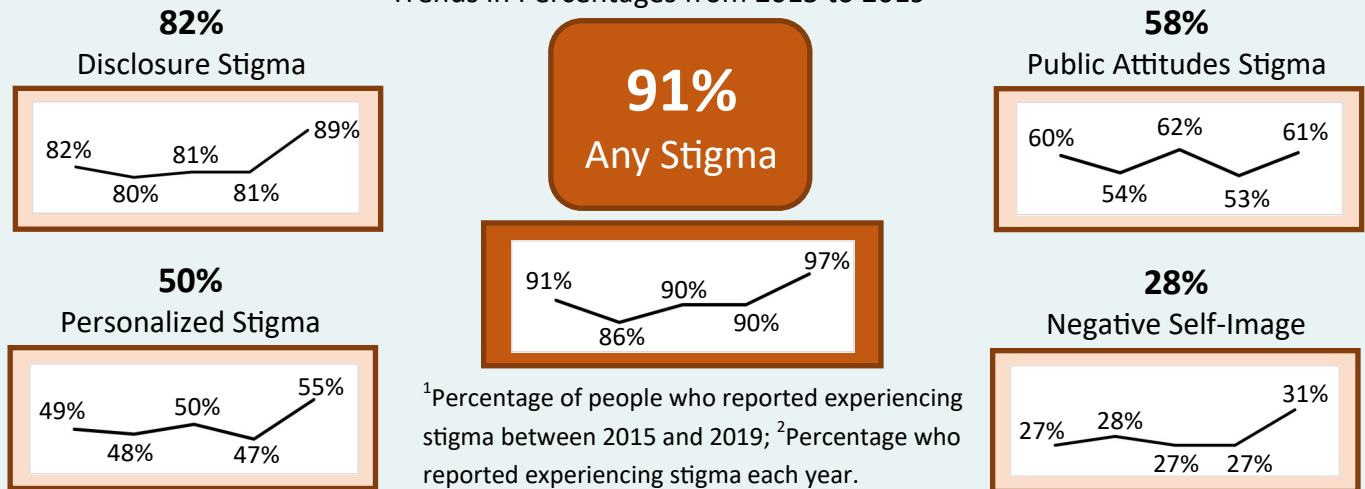
- MMP is a surveillance activity funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and implemented by state and local health departments. It collects behavioral and medical data about people living with diagnosed HIV (PLWDH) in the United States.
- From 2015 to 2019, MMP interviewed 1,036 adults living with HIV in California, excluding San Francisco and Los Angeles County. Their responses reflect their experiences during the 12 months before their interview, unless otherwise noted. All data presented are weighted.

HIV-Related Stigma

- HIV-related stigma includes negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors towards PLWDH or people perceived to have HIV.
- HIV-related stigma can come from both external and internal sources. California MMP data indicates the majority of PLWDH are experiencing external sources of stigma (i.e. disclosure stigma, public attitudes stigma, and personalized stigma) compared to internal stigma (i.e. negative self-image).
- Preventing and addressing stigma and in health care settings is vital to helping PLWDH stay in care and achieve sustained viral suppression.

Percentage of PLWDH Experiencing Stigma¹

Trends in Percentages from 2015 to 2019²



Stigma Categories and Statements	Experienced Stigma In This Form
Disclosure Stigma	82.4%
I am very careful who I tell that I have HIV.	78.7%
I worry that people who know I have HIV will tell others.	54.7%
Public Attitudes Stigma	57.8%
Most people with HIV are rejected when others find out.	49.0%
Most people think that a person with HIV is disgusting.	37.7%
Personalized Stigma	49.9%
I have been hurt by how people reacted to learning I have HIV.	40.2%
I have stopped socializing with some people because of their reactions to my HIV status.	33.2%
I have lost friends by telling them I have HIV.	27.8%
Negative Self-Image Stigma	28.2%
Having HIV makes me feel unclean.	20.9%
I feel that I am not as good a person as others because I have HIV.	20.6%
Having HIV makes me feel that I'm a bad person.	11.1%

Note: The above were statements included in the MMP interview. Participants used a 5-point likert scale to describe their agreement with each statement. Those who somewhat or strongly agreed were considered to have experienced stigma.

HIV-Related Stigma Scores by Different Characteristics for PLWDH

HIV-Related Stigma Score Calculation

- Stigma scores (ranging from 0-100) were calculated for each participant using their level of agreement to each of the stigma statements.
- Each statement contributed up to 10 points based on level of agreement.
- Median stigma scores were calculated for groups with different characteristics.

Certain characteristics were associated with higher stigma scores than others. Those who reported more stigmatization also experienced more adverse health experiences and unmet needs.

Characteristics Associated with Higher Stigma Scores

The following characteristics in PLWDH were associated with higher stigma scores.

Age

- Under 50-years old

Gender

- Females

Race/Ethnicity

- Individuals with race or ethnicity other than White (non-Hispanic)

Gender-Stratified Racial/Ethnic Group

- Black/African American men
- Hispanic/Latinx men
- Hispanic/Latinx women

Sexual Orientation

- Black/African American MSM
- Hispanic/Latinx MSM
- MSW
- WSM

Education

- Less than high school diploma
- High school diploma or equivalent

Housing Instability

- Experienced homelessness in the past 12 months

Employment

- Not currently employed
- Student¹

Time since HIV Diagnosis

- <5 years
- 5-9 years

Ancillary Service Needs

- Having at least 1 unmet need

Sexual Behavior

- Sex that increases the risk of HIV transmission²

Clinical Outcomes Associated with Higher Stigma Scores

The following clinical outcomes/adherence measures were associated with higher stigma scores.

- Missed antiretroviral therapy (ART) dose in the past 30 days
- Missed HIV care visit in the past 12 months
- Multiple ER visits in the past 12 months
- Multiple hospitalization in the past 12 months
- Major or other depression
- Moderate or severe anxiety

All data are from the 12 months prior to the interview unless specified otherwise; ¹Less than 30 observations; ²Sex with partner of negative or unknown HIV status while not sustained viral suppression, or protected by PrEP or condoms; MSM = Men who have sex with men; MSW = Men who have sex with women only; WSM = Women who have sex with men.

HIV-Related Stigma and Health Implications

Health-Related Implications

- When providers are aware of stigma and how to stop it, they can create a healthy and safe environment for PLWDH.
 - Experiencing stigma can have a negative impact on health outcomes.
 - Stigma can impact mental health, social relationships and support, and can cause hesitation when seeking treatment and testing.
 - Stigma can also cause an individual to feel they need to socially isolate and can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms.
 - Stress from feeling stigmatized, discriminated, and devalued can cause the same physical responses seen from other forms of emotional stress, such as increased blood pressure and increased cortisol.
- Rueda S, Mitra S, Chen S, *et al*. Examining the associations between HIV related stigma and health outcomes in people living with HIV/AIDS: a series of meta-analyses. *BMJ Open* 2016;6:e011453. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2016-011453



CDC Resources for Clinicians:

[Clinicians | HIV | CDC](#)

CDC Consumer Info Sheets to Provide to Patients:

[Consumer Info Sheets | Resource Library | HIV/AIDS | CDC](#)

CDC Resources for Public Health Partners:

[Partners | HIV | CDC](#)

CDC guide to help sexual health discussions with patients: [Discussing Sexual Health With Your Patients \(cdc.gov\)](#)

Technical Note

Sigma statements adapted from:

Berger B, Ferrans C, Lashley F. Measuring stigma in people with HIV: Psychometric assessment of the HIV stigma scale. *Research in Nursing and Health* 2001;24(6): 518-529.

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CDC MMP: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/systems/mmp/>

Office of AIDS MMP: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/Pages/OAsre.aspx>

